

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (original) A diagnostic method, comprising:
 - estimating a temperature of a NOx-reducing catalyst based on a thermodynamic model of said NOx-reducing catalyst;
 - estimating a hydrocarbon conversion efficiency of said NOx-reducing catalyst based on said temperature estimate; and
 - estimating a parameter indicative of an age of said NOx-reducing catalyst based on said estimated hydrocarbon conversion efficiency of said catalyst.
2. (original) The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said thermodynamic model of said NOx-reducing catalyst is described by the following equations:

$$\frac{d}{dt}(c_{substrate}m_{cat}T + c_{gas}m_{gas}T) = c_p W(T_{in} - T) + h A_{ex}(T_{amb} - T) + (W_{HC} \cdot f_{burn}(T) + f_{rel}(T) \cdot HC_{st}) \cdot Q_u \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} HC_{st} = (1 - f_{burn}(T)) \cdot W_{HC} - f_{rel}(T) \cdot HC_{st} \quad (2)$$

wherein $c_{substrate}$ is a heat capacity of a NOx-reducing catalyst substrate, m_{cat} is a mass of said catalyst, c_{gas} is a heat capacity of the exhaust gas, m_{gas} is a mass of the exhaust gas in the catalyst, c_p is a heat capacity of air at constant pressure, W is a total exhaust flow into said catalyst, T_{in} is a temperature of an exhaust gas mixture entering said NOx-reducing catalyst, h is a convective heat transfer coefficient of said catalyst, A_{ex} is a catalyst area exposed to said exhaust gas mixture entering said catalyst, T_{amb} is an ambient temperature, W_{HC} is a hydrocarbon flow transported in said exhaust gas mixture, $f_{burn}(T)$ is said hydrocarbon conversion efficiency of said

catalyst, Q_{th} , is a heat contained in a unit mass of fuel, $f_{\text{H}}(T)$ is an amount of hydrocarbons released and subsequently oxidized, and HC_s , is an amount of hydrocarbons stored in the catalyst.

3. (original) The method as set forth in Claim 2 wherein said hydrocarbon conversion efficiency of said NOx-reducing catalyst is estimated by inverting said model in order to obtain an input from an output.
4. (original) The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said NOx-reducing catalyst is an ALNC.
5. (original) The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said NOx-reducing catalyst is an oxidation catalyst.
6. (original) The method as set forth in Claim 1 further comprising providing an indication of catalyst degradation based on said parameter.

7-16. Cancelled.

17. (original) A diagnostic system, comprising:
 - an internal combustion engine;
 - a NOx-reducing catalyst coupled downstream of said engine;and
 - a computer storage medium having a computer program encoded therein, comprising:
 - code for estimating a temperature of said NOx-reducing catalyst based on a thermodynamic model of said NOx-reducing catalyst;
 - code for estimating a hydrocarbon conversion efficiency of said NOx-reducing catalyst based on said temperature estimate; and

code for estimating a parameter indicative of an age of said NOx-reducing catalyst based on said estimated hydrocarbon conversion efficiency of said catalyst.